

Date: March 2, 1993

To: Nursing Homes  
Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled

NH 7  
FDD 5

From: Susan Wood, Deputy Director  
Bureau of Quality Compliance

Subject: FOOD SAFETY AND RESIDENT ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance for facilities who wish to incorporate cooking/food preparation into activity programs, and is prompted by a suggestion from industry representatives.

A facility must care for its residents in a manner and in an environment that promotes maintenance or enhancement of each resident's quality of life. Certainly, food and food preparation activities have been a major part of many resident's quality of life. Incorporating food and food preparation into a meaningful activity program can go a long way to enhancing quality of life for residents in long term care facilities.

Along with food and food preparation activities comes the responsibility of protecting the health, safety and welfare of residents. There is evidence to show that foodborne illness is ten times higher in nursing home residents than in any other setting. Because of the fragile health of nursing home residents, the consequences of foodborne illness is often more serious in this setting. Prevention is the key to protecting residents from food borne illnesses. The same food service sanitation and food handling requirements apply to activity programs as apply to the facility's food service department.

Food borne illness is preventable! Mishandling and improper cooking and storage of food are the most common contributing factors to food borne illness. Activity staff must work closely with the dietary services department, the dietitian and the food service manager, to evaluate the food safety factors of any food-related activity program. Facilities need to have clear guidelines in place that address food safety issues related to activity programs. Some of the areas that should be addressed are as follows:

1. Strict adherence to good handwashing practices by both residents and staff
2. Proper food storage practices
3. Strict adherence to proper handling, storing and preparation of potentially hazardous foods (ie. meats, poultry, eggs, and dairy products)
4. Following proper cooking methods
5. Assuring only wholesome food is served
6. On-going supervision to assure the protection of residents' health and safety
7. Monitoring of safety factors for equipment being used, and provide adequate safeguards to protect residents
8. Proper handling and disposal of garbage and debris
9. Proper cleaning and sanitizing of all dishes, utensils and equipment
10. Good housekeeping and maintenance of the activity area
11. On-going quality assurance/quality improvement program, with monitoring by qualified personnel
12. Criteria for accepting food donations.

In addition to the food safety issues, activity staff must also know and adhere to the resident's nutritional plan of care. Malnutrition is a serious problem for the elderly, including many residents in nursing homes. Foods incorporated, into activity programs should enhance the nutritional quality of the residents diet and not diminish it. Activity staff need to work in cooperation with dietary services in planning food-related activities. Timing of activities where food is served

needs careful consideration. Other considerations include proper attention to diet modifications related to chewing and swallowing problems, and special diet therapy considerations involving food restrictions.

Food and food preparation activities can greatly enhance the resident's quality of life in the nursing home when safety and the resident's plan of care are taken into account. Food preparation activities can bring back memories, enhance resident's self worth, promote improvement with skills of daily living, stimulate interests and enhance the physical, mental and psychosocial well-being of residents. The opportunities are limited only by the creativity and imagination of the staff and the residents they serve. And of course the budget. LET'S MAKE BREAD!

If you have any further questions please call either Billie March, at (608) 266-7188, or Jean Kollasch, at (608) 267-0466, or write to the above address.

SW/BM/jh

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